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SUBJECT: SENEGAL'S OPPOSITION PUT TO THE TEST

REF: A. DAKAR 00565

[1](#)B. DAKAR 00368
[1](#)C. DAKAR 01516
[1](#)D. DAKAR 01588

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) The opposition, already fractured, has been put to the test in recent weeks. On June 30, the terms of office for Senegalese deputies should have ended, but the National Assembly remains in session thanks to a 2005 act extending the terms by eight months (Ref A). Despite debate within the parties and society at large, only a handful of MPs walked out. Two high-profile opposition leaders are menaced with investigation and prosecution over charges stemming from years ago, charges that portray them as corrupt and ineffectual managers. Ultimately, efforts to use these charges as political weapons could backfire. END SUMMARY.

TOYOTA LAND CRUISERS AND PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

[1](#)2. (SBU) Several opposition leaders called for MPs to protest the Wade-inspired law extending the National Assembly term to February 2007 (when elections are scheduled to take place) by abandoning their seats on June 30. 25 of the 29 opposition MPs, though, decided to stay. Deputies earn USD 2,500 per year, and most do not have any other income. Wade eased the choice for each member of the Assembly with a salary increase of 300 percent, a four-wheel drive vehicle, and a piece of land in Dakar on which to build a house. One opposition leader labeled MPs remaining in the Assembly (including those from opposition parties) as "illegal" and "usurping power." Another, though, more understanding, said it was natural: "Many of these people have never even driven a car before, and now they have brand new Land Cruisers. Of course, they're not going to give them up."

[1](#)3. (SBU) The dispute over leaving parliament was by one account extremely damaging to presidential candidate Moustapha Niasse and his Alliance des Force de Progres. The debate had apparently simmered for months within the AFP as Niasse prepared to leave the Assembly while his followers leaned toward staying. Within the opposition coalition, meanwhile, Niasse apparently clashed sharply with Ousmane Tanor Dieng, who remains in the Assembly with all of his Socialist MPs.

OLD SKELETONS IN THE OPPOSITION CLOSET

[1](#)4. (U) In an additional challenge, Wade has called for resuming investigation of cases of mismanagement involving both Niasse and Tanor. Niasse, who before becoming Wade's Prime Minister from 2000-2001 was Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1991 to 1998, is accused of participating in selling diplomatic passports to businessmen and others from mainland

China. Tanor, who served as ex-President Diouf's Cabinet Director, was allegedly involved in secretly selling fishing licenses to Russian ship owners on behalf of the GOS to replenish Socialist political coffers.

COMMENT

¶15. (SBU) Allegations against Niasse and Tanor are pointed attempts to demonstrate that not all charges of corruption involve the ruling party, and to widen cleavages already magnified by calls for Deputies to step down from the National Assembly on June 30. Such political gaming carries risks for Wade, though. Tanor, if prosecuted, could be tempted to reveal information to which he had access when he supervised all presidential services, including the intelligence community. Moreover, it may be shortsighted for Wade to pursue Tanor as a way to cast blame for Senegal's fishing and illegal migration problems on someone else (Ref C and D). Fishermen and NGOs may remind the public that, whoever was to blame originally, no significant or concrete steps have been taken during Wade's presidency to help the fishing industry.

¶16. (SBU) In addition, now that Senegal and mainland China have established diplomatic ties and China has increased offers of investment and aid, dredging up Niasse's case and accusations that Chinese fraudulently obtained passports to help them get to European countries, could serve as a first test of the strength of those ties. END COMMENT.
JACOBS